

The ice-covered Rideau Canal was wall-to-wall with people this weekend as record crowds turned out to participate in Winterlude 1979.

Organized by the National Capital Commission, it was the kind of weekend when thousands of Ottawans walked, ran, slid, skated, clowned, danced and just plain enjoyed themselves on ice.

And among the special guests and visitors who joined in the fun were Prime Minister Trudeau and some of the provincial premiers, here for the First Ministers' Conference which opens today.

It was the kind of weekend that saw trotting races on the ice for the first time in half a century; hockey players racing a horse, and waiters and bartenders skittering around a tricky course in order to show how fast they could serve drinks on ice.

It was the kind of weekend when fire, police and ambulance vehicles screeched down the ice, while the skaters cleared a respectful path.

But the emergency tactics were all in aid of The Great Bed Race Saturday to publicize the Ottawa Civic Hospital's fundraising drive.

It was the kind of weekend where tin can curling was gleefully played on the ice of Dows Lake and where thousands of people made their way through a magical "village" of ice and snow, to vote for their favorite ice sculpture.

In short, there was a full program of on-ice activities that ran non-stop from the time the canal opened at 8 a.m. Saturday until it closed at midnight on Sunday.

Even the weatherman co-operated, for a while anyway, bringing sunshine and exhilarating -12C to -20C degree temperatures.

● Ice Sculpture Contest.

Almost 7,000 people turned out on Saturday to vote for their favorite ice sculpture at Dows Lake.

There were 35 sculptures in the competition, ranging from the bizarre to the fanciful. Many of the sculptures reflected the fact that 1979 is the Year of the Child and favorite nursery rhyme and storybook characters were depicted.

Five professional judges took part and judging was done on the basis of quality of workmanship, sculptural detail, originality and creativity.

Prizes were awarded on the basis of 60% for the judges' decision and 40% for the public vote.

Winners shared \$5000 prize money donated by Dillawri Motors of Stittsville.

Category 1 (Universities and Colleges) Algonquin College; "Dreams of Tallies and Hefsalumps"

Carleton University School of Industrial Design; "Spring into Winter"

Carleton University Residents, 7th Glenarry; "Canadian Unity"

Category 2 (Secondary Schools) Ecole Secondaire Cartier; "Visitors from Outer Space"

Laurentian High School; "The Three Bears"

Lisgar High School; "Carousel on a cloud"

Category 3 (Public)

Friends and Children of UNICEF; "Old Woman who lived in a Shoe"

Mr Ridgeway and Company; "The Skate"

Ronald and Renata Green; "Lumberjack Joe Montferrand"

Category 4 (Special Prize for originality and creativity)

Gloucester High School; "Gloucester gator"

For the winners of the Trotting Races on Sunday, see Journal sports section.

Sunday brought snow, but that didn't stop an estimated 35,000 people turning out to watch the harness racing.

Other events that will be taking place during the week include a children's day on Tuesday, senior citizens' day on Wednesday, group sleigh rides and bean suppers by reservation, and several recreational and Skate-a-Thon events on Saturday. Winterlude will close with a special skating party next Sunday.

The results:

● The Great Bed Race.

A fast-moving team from Gloucester Firefighters Association, swiftly propelled their illuminated and smoking wonder bed to victory.

The urgency might have been partly due to the fact that Gloucester fire chief, Andy St. Martin, partly disguised by a false moustache and straw boater was the groaning "patient" on the bed.

Gloucester beat out entries from four other city firefighting associations.

Meanwhile the Civic Hospital's own entry from the emergency-admitting section won its own 'life and death' race to the finishing line. This bed, complete with intravenous bottles bobbing, managed to skillfully weave its way around a sirensounding entry from the Ottawa Ambulance Service.

Other winning teams were from the RCMP, Algonquin College and Pembroke.

Pembroke beat out Cornwall, Smiths Falls and Perth to receive the main trophy for out-of-town beds.

The other winners all received "The Order of the Great Band Aid," a scroll created by the hospital auxiliary and signed by Ottawa's Mayor Dewar.

During the bed race, the Civic's candy strippers were out on the ice collecting funds for the hospital's redevelopment program.